

G. Falls Lake/Neuse River Corridor

2. FLAT RIVER BEND BOTTOMLAND FOREST

SITE DESCRIPTION

County: Durham
Quad: Lake Michie
Significance: Zoological: County (DURH 1); Botanical: 4 - State
Landscape Function: Zoological: Medium (DURH 1); Botanical: No special merit
Boundary Integrity: Medium
Level of Threat: Zoological: Low; Botanical: 1 - Protected
Protection Status: High
Community Viability: Zoological: Medium to Low (DURH 2); Botanical: 3 - Excellent

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT FEATURES:

1. Historically possessed a population of Neuse River waterdogs (*Necturus lewisi*), state listed as Special Concern.
2. Contains a remnant stand of old growth bottomland hardwoods—one of the few tracts of forest of any sort left along the lower Flat River. This stand should be considered an essential anchor for any efforts to recreate a continuously forested corridor connecting woodlands around Lake Michie with those of the lower Eno and Falls Lake shoreline.

LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

After carving its way down through the edge of the Carolina Slate Belt, the Flat River flows out into the Triassic Basin about a mile below Lake Michie. As is characteristic of other Triassic Basin streams, the floodplain broadens as it enters the Basin, stretching as much as 1.5 miles across at its widest point. It is also three miles long from the mouth of the lower Flat River Gorge to the confluence with the Eno.

Most of the bottomland forests that once existed in this floodplain has been cleared, however (see site report for Flat River Wildlife Area), leaving only a few isolated remnants. The best of these stands occurs within the crook of a broad, north-east running bend in the river. This site, the Flat River Bend Forest Natural Area contains probably the oldest stand of bottomland hardwoods in the entire Triassic Basin section of the Upper Neuse Watershed, and possesses one of the richest areas of spring wildflowers anywhere in the region (Sutter, 1987). However, it is also entirely surrounded by fields, and apart from this one tract, no other substantial forest cover remains along the Flat River all the way to its confluence with the Eno, two miles downstream.